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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

March 30, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 1512 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: EAID, PREL, PGOV, PHUM
Captions: None
Subject: TFIZ01: UAE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY HAS AN AMBITIOUS
HUMANITARIAN AGENDA IN IRAQ
Ref: None

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 01512

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: P/M RSO AMB DCM ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM:RAALBRIGHT
DRAFTED: ECON:CCRUMPLER
CLEARED: ECON:TWILLIAMS, POL:STWILLIAMS

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OO RUEHC RUCNRAQ RUEKJCS RUMICEA RUEKJCS RUEHDE
DE RUEHAD #1512/01 0891311
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9148
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCINCCENT INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI PRIORITY 2970

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001512

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IRAQ TASK FORCE, ALSO NEA/ARP, NEA/RA,
NEA/EX, NEA/IPA, AND IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: DECL 03/30/13
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: TFIZ01: UAE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY HAS AN
AMBITIOUS HUMANITARIAN AGENDA IN IRAQ

REF: ABU DHABI 1439

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by DCM Richard A. Alright for
reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: Red Crescent Authority (RCA)
Secretary General San'a Al-Kitbi confirmed to

SIPDIS
Econchief on March 29 that RCA had sent three
delegations to Iraq during the last two months, the

most recent of which traveled to Iraq overland from Jordan on March 23. Highlighting the dangers of humanitarian operations in Iraq, Al-Kitbi claimed that -- despite clearances from the Jordanian and Iraqi Red Crescent Societies -- the March 23 convoy of three, clearly-marked vehicles came under Coalition small-arms fire as it traveled overland towards Baghdad. The group nonetheless was able to reach Baghdad (one driver sustained minor injuries), where RCA officials visited a number of hospitals and orphanages, delivering blankets and medicine to the Iraqi Red Crescent Society. Al-Kitbi stressed that the RCA would not publicize the alleged incident, but was interested in guidance on ways to ensure better deconfliction and asked whether the ICRC could serve this purpose since the RCA is reluctant to deal directly with governmental/military authorities.

13. (C) Summary, continued: The RCA Secretary-General also requested a response from the USG with regard to permission for the UAE Red Crescent to deliver humanitarian aid to needy Iraqis -- wherever they may be. She noted that while the Iraqi regime would likely reject aid convoys from Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti charities, the UAE Red Crescent believes it can get permission to pass through Iraqi lines. Would the Coalition military authorities permit this to get aid to desperate Iraqi civilians? As her final point, Al-Kitbi requested Post's assistance in facilitating a large shipment of humanitarian supplies to Umm Qasr. (Note: UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shaykh Hamdan bin Zayid Al-Nahyan told the Ambassador on March 28 that getting this shipment to Iraq is a top priority for the UAEG. End Note.) Econchief stressed the importance of coordination for the safety of all involved, and noted that while Umm Qasr is currently closed to civilian shipping, this may change in the next few days. Subsequent to this meeting, Econchief informed CENTCOM of the March 23 incident near Baghdad, and initiated coordination between the RCA and the Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) in Kuwait to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies to Iraq. End Summary.

RCA Workers Enter Iraq To Distribute Aid...

14. (U) According to Red Crescent Authority Secretary-General San'a Al-Kitbi, during a March 23-28 visit to Iraq, an RCA delegation (working in partnership with UNICEF) visited a number of hospitals and orphanages to deliver emergency medical supplies and high-calorie milk and biscuits valued at 500,000 AED (\$136,000 USD). (Note: They also delivered supplies of blankets and medicine to the cities of Basra, Najaf, and Mosul through the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, according to press reports. End Note.)

15. (C) Al-Kitbi noted that the delegation also distributed 20,000 loaves of bread to more than 5,000 families in Baghdad. The RCA hired local bakers to make the bread and contracted with regional flourmills to obtain the necessary ingredients. RCA also purchased 1,000 head of sheep and goats for slaughter, and distributed the meat to needy Iraqi families.

...But Experience The Dangers Of War First-Hand

16. (C) Al-Kitbi reported to Econchief that the three vehicle convoy traveling overland from Jordan came under alleged Coalition small arms fire nearly 60 kilometers outside of Baghdad, although the delegation traveled in clearly marked Red Crescent vehicles with diplomatic plates. The vehicles were armored and the delegation came through largely unscathed, although

one driver was lightly wounded. Al-Kitbi noted that RCA had coordinated the visit with the UAE embassies in Amman and Baghdad, working with the Iraqi and Jordanian Red Crescent Societies and the ICRC. She had assumed that these entities had obtained the necessary clearances from the Iraqi Government and the U.S. military to allow safe passage for the aid workers. The RCA had no intention of publicizing the incident, but would appreciate guidance on how to prevent future such incidents (here Al-Kitbi noted that, in general, the RCA prefers to coordinate via non-governmental organizations, if that is possible).

¶7. (S) Al-Kitbi noted that Iraqi authorities had urged the RCA to travel overland from Syria, as this was a "safer and shorter" route, but the RCA ultimately decided this was a bad idea. Econchief noted recent public statements by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld regarding military resupply of Iraq via Syria. Al-Kitbi smiled and again reiterated that the RCA had ultimately decided not to do what had been so strongly recommended by the Iraqis.

Eager To Move More Aid To Iraq -- Fast...

¶8. (C) Al-Kitbi confirmed that a RCA ship hoped to depart soon for Umm Qasr in Iraq loaded with 1,000-2,000 boxes (35 kilos each) of basic foodstuffs. Al-Kitbi presented a sample box containing sugar, dates, pasta, milk, oil, cans of beans, baby formula, and water to Econchief for examination. Al-Kitbi requested Post's assistance in facilitating the shipment, but noted that the RCA could ship to Kuwait's Mina Al-Shuwaikh and the supplies trucked 60 kilometers overland to Iraq if it encountered problems entering Umm Qasr.

...And Where It Is Needed Most

¶9. (C) Al-Kitbi stressed that the RCA wants to deliver its aid directly, not warehouse supplies for subsequent delivery by others. She also noted that the RCA has as its mandate helping the neediest of the needy; to that end, the RCA would like to receive permission from the coalition to cross the lines and deliver aid in regime-controlled territory. The RCA official stated that while the Iraqi authorities were not likely to permit Kuwaiti or Saudi charities to perform these activities, the UAE RCA has a long history of working closely and cooperatively with its Iraqi counterparts. No official request has yet been made, Al-Kitbi observed, but a positive response from the Coalition side would clear the way for an approach to be made to Baghdad. Econchief responded that we welcome the efforts of the RCA and will do all we can to facilitate the delivery of aid to the needy in Iraq. While Umm Qasr is currently closed to civilian shipping, that situation could change shortly. We will work closely with the HOC in Kuwait to get answers as soon as possible. Econchief noted that continued close cooperation and sharing of information would be vital to a successful effort; Al-Kitbi said she welcomed such an exchange on an ongoing basis.

Comment

¶10. (C) The UAE Red Crescent Society is well-financed, enjoys good operational contacts inside Iraq, and is eager to play a role in getting humanitarian aid to the Iraqis who need it most. Post is grateful for the initial positive responses we have received from the HOC to our various requests;

facilitating UAE RCA operations, in our view, will well serve both our immediate humanitarian goals as well our longer-term policy objectives. To that end, we will continue to work closely with the RCA and will report on its activities as appropriate.

Wahba